NABARD does not provide loans to farmers through State Governments. However, it provides loans to State Governments for share capital contribution to Cooperative Credit Institutions at an interest rate of 8 % p.a. currently. Besides, it provides loans to State Governments for completion/creation of new infrastructure projects under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). The rate of interest presently charged by NABARD from the State Governments for the financial assistance provided to them under RIDF IV to VII is 7%, and the RIDF VIII to X is Bank Rate + 0.5% p.a. (currently 6.5%).

Linking of Major Rivers

*99. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Task Force appointed by the previous Government with regard to the linking of major rivers in India is still functional;

(b) if so, the latest status report with regard thereto;

(c) whether the Task Force has been able to achieve any breakthrough with regard to the major outstanding issues like ecological sustainability, technological feasibility and financial viability of the project; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Task Force on Interlinking of Rivers (TF-ILR) has held 16 meetings so far, the last one being on 5th October, 2004. As per its terms of reference, the Task Force has submitted Action Plan-I giving an outline of the time schedules for the completion of the feasibility studies, detailed project reports, estimated cost, implementation schedule, concrete benefits and advantages of the project etc. on 30.4.2003. Action Plan-II giving alternate options of funding and execution of the project as also suggested methods for cost recovery has also been submitted by the Task Force in April, 2004.

(c) and (d) The Task Force has critically reviewed the interlinking of rivers (ILR) proposals and prioritized two links *viz.* Ken-Betwa and Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal under Peninsular Component for preparation of detailed project reports (DPR). It also got prepared Terms of Reference (TOR) for preparation of DPRs to address all aspects including technological feasibility, socio-economic and environmental impacts and financial viability.